IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-37 (Cancelled).

38. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter comprising:

a first lens that collimates a light beam emitted from a first optical fiber;

a first Wollaston prism that separates the light collimated by the first lens into a first beam component and a second beam component; and

a second Wollaston prism disposed in a path of the first beam component and a path of the second beam component, wherein the second Wollaston prism bends the first beam component and the second beam component such that a second lens focuses the first beam component on a second optical fiber and such that the second lens focuses the second beam component on a third optical fiber.

39. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the second optical fiber and the third optical fiber are polarization maintaining fibers.

40. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the first lens is a collimating lens that collimates the light beam emitted from the first optical fiber.

41. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the second lens is a focusing lens.

42. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the optical polarization beam splitter is a combiner when a light beam is received from the second optical fiber and the third optical fiber instead of the first optical fiber.

43. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the first lens, the first Wollaston prism, and the second Wollaston prism are substantially parallel to a single optical axis.

44. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 38, wherein the first lens, the first Wollasont prism, the second Wollaston prism, and the second lens are disposed in a package having a length less than 30 millimeters.

45. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter 38, wherein an optical path through the first lens, the second lens, the first Wollaston prism, and the second Wollaston prism does not include epoxy.

46. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter system comprising:

a first lens that collimates a light beam emitted from a first optical fiber;

a birefringent crystal that separates the light beam into a first beam component and a second beam component; and

a Wollaston prism that bends the first beam component and the second component such that a second lens focuses the first beam component on a second optical fiber and such that the second lens focuses the second beam component on a third optical fiber.

47. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 46, wherein the first lens is a collimating lens.

48. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 46, wherein the separates the second beam component at a walkoff angle with respect to the first beam component.

49. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 46, wherein the birefringent crystal has a length that is selected to provide a selected walkoff distance between the first beam component and the second beam component.

50. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 46, wherein the first lens, the birefringent crystal, and the Wollaston prism are substantially parallel to a single optical axis.

51. (New) An optical polarization beam splitter as defined in claim 46, wherein the first lens, the second lens, the birefringent crystal, and the Wollaston prism are disposed in a package having a length less than 33 millimeters and a diameter of less than 5.5 millimeters.

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52. (New) An optical component that functions as a splitter when a light beam enters the optical component from a first end having a first optical fiber and that acts as a combiner when a first component beam and a second component beam enter the optical component through a second end having a second optical fiber and a third optical fiber, the optical component comprising:

a first lens disposed between a Wollaston prism and the first optical fiber;

a second lens disposed between the Wollaston prism and both the second optical fiber and the third optical fiber;

wherein a single light beam received by the first lens from the first optical fiber is split by the Wollaston prism such that a first component beam of the light is focused on the second optical fiber and such that a second component beam is focused on the third optical fiber; and

wherein light received by the second lens from the second optical fiber and the third optical fiber is combined by the Wollaston prism into a single light beam that is focused on the first optical fiber by the first lens.

53. (New) An optical component as defined in claim 52, wherein the first lens, the second lens, and the Wollaston prism are substantially parallel to a single optical axis defined by the first end and the second end of the optical component.

54. (New) An optical component as defined in claim 52, wherein the Wollaston prism has an optical axis that is aligned with an optical axis of the first optical fiber, the second optical fiber, and the third optical fiber.

55. (New) An optical component as defined in claim 52, wherein an optical path through the first lens, the Wollaston prism, and the second lens does not include epoxy.

56. (New) An optical component as defined in claim 52, wherein an optical path through the optical component has a length less than 28 millimeters.